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ABSTRACT

At the request of beginning English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students and their teachers, pronunciation problems of Spanish and Vietnamese speaking learners were identified and prioritized by ESL teaching staff. Under the direction of the project director, resources to help teachers aid their students in addressing these problems were identified and analyzed. For these resources, a number of brief, practical teaching strategies and activities were developed, tested, and revised in order to answer students' requests for help with pronunciation without compromising the integrity of the communicative life skills curriculum. The result was a guidebook for ESL practitioners--particularly those with little formal training or experience in phonology--that contains the methodology so that practitioners with learners from other language groups might replicate the process to meet the local program needs of their students. Included is a condensed, easy to follow background "crash course" on phonology as well as tips, strategies, and classroom activities for enriching the teaching of ESL in beginning life skills classes by incorporating work with pronunciation. The guidebook also contains an annotated bibliography in order to help other programs and practitioners meet the needs of students from more than two dozen different language groups. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education/JL)

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A Guidebook for Enriching ESL Instruction With Pronunciation Practice: A Model of Teacher Action Research

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Product and Final Report

ADULT LITERACY CENTER
OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY

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ABSTRACT PAGE

Title: A Guidebook for Enriching ESL Instruction with Pronunciation Practice: A Model of Teacher Action Research

Project No.: 98-5004 **Funding:** $20,245

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Purpose:

To develop a guidebook containing basic "how to's" of teaching pronunciation in beginning ESL classrooms, sample classroom activities and a guide to resources.

Procedures:

The teacher action research model was used to identify pronunciation problems of Vietnamese and Spanish speakers learning English by a team of practitioners and a mentor. Problems were identified and prioritized by ESL teaching staff. Then resources were identified and analyzed. Practical teaching strategies and activities were developed, tested and revised in order to answer students' requests for pronunciation help.

Summary of Findings:

There are common pronunciation problems between Spanish and Vietnamese speakers. Teachers and tutors who are new to phonology can diagnose those problems and can integrate teaching pronunication into ongoing curriculum. The guidebook is a condensed, easy to follow background "crash course" on phonology as well as tips, strategies and classroom activities for enriching the teaching of ESL in beginning life skills classes.

Comments (Conclusions, Findings, Barriers, if any):

In reviewing available teaching materials, insufficient attention is paid to teaching pronunciation to beginning ESL students.

We found no barriers.

Products (if applicable): A Guidebook and Final Report

Descriptors (To be completed only by Bureau staff):

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ABSTRACT

At the request of beginning ESL students and their teachers, pronunciation problems of Spanish and Vietnamese speaking learners were identified and prioritized by ESL teaching staff. Under the direction of the project director, resources to help teachers aid their students in addressing these problems were identified and analyzed. From these resources, a number of brief, practical teaching strategies and activities were developed, tested and revised in order to answer the students' request for help with pronunciation without compromising the integrity of the communicative life skills curriculum.

The result was a guidebook for ESL practitioners--particularly those with little formal training or experience in phonology--that contains the methodology so that practitioners with learners from other language groups might replicate the process to meet the local program needs of their students. Included is a condensed, easy to follow background "crash course" on phonology as well as tips, strategies and classroom activities for enriching the teaching of ESL in beginning life skills classes by incorporating work with pronunciation. Lastly, this guidebook includes an annotated bibliography in order to help other programs and practitioners meet the needs of students from more than two dozen different language groups.

This project will be of interest to ESL practitioners in general, particularly teachers and tutors of beginning ESL learners as well as tutor trainers and program directors.

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The methodology and activities developed in this project were designed, implemented and revised in and for beginning ESL classes where too often specific instruction in pronunciation has been given either too much or too little attention. Among its many objectives, this project sought to interject effective pronunciation teaching into beginning ESL classrooms in order to meet student needs--all the while maintaining the content and integrity of a communicative life skills curriculum. In other words, we did not want to re-invent Phonetics 101.

And we wanted to do this in such a way that teachers or tutors with little or no background in phonetics or phonology could reap the same rewards with their classes--regardless of first language(s) or level or instruction. We believe we have achieved our goal. The methodology and teaching activities that resulted from this project were tested with teachers and students in sixteen different ESL classes throughout the year.

In order to provide a focus for the development of a specific methodology so that teachers could identify and prioritize students' pronunciation problems we chose to concentrate on speakers of Spanish and Vietnamese. However, the methodology was designed to help teachers of speakers of any language. Moreover, since our ESL classes also contained speakers of languages other than Spanish and Vietnamese, we designed the activities to be effective with speakers from any language background.

While the classroom activities presented in this project have proven to be appropriate and effective for learners on all levels, it is important to note that they were specifically

created or "re-invented" in order to meet the needs of beginning learners in programs offering a communicative life skills curriculum. The 1994 ABLE Curriculum Guide (Royce, 1994) for ESL defines a beginner as having "little or no ability to speak . . . unable to function independently using the language." Experience tells us that this is indeed a reasonable definition of beginners. And it was the needs of these learners that we set out to meet by learning how to incorporate the teaching of pronunciation into existing curricula without letting pronunciation dominate the instruction.

Pronunciation, as defined in Webster's New World Dictionary of American English, is "the act or manner of pronouncing words with reference to the production of sounds, the placing of stress, intonation, etc." That's a wonderful definition of pronunciation--assuming of course one knows what "pronouncing" means. So, just to be on the safe side, if we go the extra step, we find pronounce means "to utter or articulate a word or sound in the required standard or manner." We knew that. You did too, right? But what does this mean for ESL students and their teachers?

It seems as though if we take that "in the required manner or standard" business too much to heart we will indeed have our work cut out for us. Perhaps we need a second opinion. Interestingly enough, the Oxford Elementary Learner's Dictionary is considerably more merciful. Here we find a definition of pronunciation we can work with: "how you say a word or words." Before we go any further, it is to our benefit (and our students) to have a clear idea of precisely where the two overlap.

In teaching pronunciation to ESL students, especially to beginners, the goal is **NOT** to eliminate all traces of a foreign accent and approximate native pronunciation. (Kenworthy,

1987; Avery and Ehrlich, 1992) Such a task would prove herculean for learners at all levels -- particularly beginners. Indeed, some learners will come close before they die. More, however, will die trying. Nobody seems to agree on exactly why this is so although age, native language, previous level of education, individual learning styles and degree of individual motivation all seem to interact in different learners producing varying degrees of success. (Kenworthy, 1987; Avery and Ehrlich, 1992; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994) So forget about "in the required standard or manner."

If we return to our learner's dictionary definition of "how you say a word or words" and combine it with what remains of Webster's definition, we get something like *how words are said paying attention to sound production, stress placement and intonation.* Now *this* we can work on with beginning ESL students.

Implicit in our definition above is the idea that there is more than one way to say words. Webster seemed to suggest that there is a right way and a wrong way. Experienced second language teachers, however, know that the issue of pronunciation is no longer this black and white. In fact, numerous shades of gray--some more easily recognizable than others--would more aptly describe the issue of pronunciation in second language acquisition.

In teaching beginning ESL students pronunciation, what we want to strive for is not pure white or black native pronunciation. Rather, what we hope to achieve with time and practice is a recognizable, i.e. comprehensible shade of gray that will enable the learner to achieve his communicative purpose. Kenworthy (1987) refers to this impure concept of pronunciation as "understandability" or "intelligibility" and devotes the lion's share of her second chapter to discussing how this can be objectively evaluated.

Essentially, she establishes simple yet effective means by which independent observers/ listeners can rate learners' speech. There are several ways in which this can be accomplished either through the use of additional teachers, classroom tutors, visitors or cassettes. In each case, the rater's observations are recorded providing important assessment and learner documentation information. The methodology is easy. Native speaking listeners either record what they hear and the teacher rates their record or such listeners can rate speakers on a one to five scale of ease/ difficulty in understanding. Such methods allow for pre-, post and progressive observations. The problem becomes the staffing. It can be difficult to locate "extra" personnel to do the listening. Such was the case in our study. While we were able to occasionally take advantage of an unsuspecting classroom visitor, we were generally limited to teachers' classroom observations and learners' self assessment and feedback. Nonetheless, teachers did note and, more importantly, learners did report noticeable progress. Additionally, with the sense of accomplishment experienced by learners came an increasing desire to practice and perfect their new language.

The guide that follows is divided into three key components:

- **a methodology** which ESL practitioners--teachers and tutors alike-- can follow in order to correctly identify, diagnose and prioritize pronunciation problems that their students may be experiencing as well as possible solutions to those problems
- **activities and teaching strategies** that are phonologically "user-friendly" and can easily be incorporated into the context of existing ESL cirricula in order to enhance students' speaking skills
- **a select annotated list of the most current teacher's resources available** that is

intended to provide time-saving guidance for practitioners who may wish to pursue more local or personal interests.

DESCRIPTION

Okay, so we want to help our students with their pronunciation. But where do we begin? What problems are they having? Maybe there are some that we can readily identify. No doubt there are others that we can't quite put our finger on. We just know the student(s) is/are impossible to understand. With time, *we* become used to the students' accents. However, English speakers with whom the students interact outside of the classroom don't seem to have our talent for understanding non-English speakers learning to speak English. We see, we hear, we feel progress is being made in the classroom. But the students return to class complaining that when they attempt to practice "on the outside" nobody understands them. What are we going to do? The methodology which we have developed to deal with this dilemma consists of six steps:

- problem identification
- selection of solution(s)
- implementation
- review and revision
- assessment of student progress
- student empowerment

Identification of the problems

List your questions. In order to solve--or, more accurately in the case of pronunciation, *begin* to solve--a problem, we need to understand exactly what that problem is. If there are multiple problems, then these will need to be categorized and prioritized so

that the most common and most important are dealt with firstly and most effectively. After all, we are dealing with beginners here. In most cases, the problems are likely to be numerous.

In the case of our Spanish and Vietnamese speakers, we needed to ask ourselves the following questions:

--What are the pronunciation problems of Spanish speakers learning English?

--What are the pronunciation problems of Vietnamese speakers learning English?

--What are the problems common to both groups, if any?

--What problems are unique to each group?

--*From the point of view of the ESL professional*, which problems most interfere with effective communication? Which interfere least?

--*From the point of view of the individual learners*, which problems most interfere with effective communication? Which do so least?

--Which problems will be addressed in class? When? How? Why?

Decide whom to ask. In order to identify pronunciation problems we relied on three sources of information: 1) research from current experts in the fields of phonology and linguistic contrastive analysis. (The sources we found to be most valuable are cited in the selected annotated bibliography at the end of this project.), 2) observations from classroom teachers involved in the project and 3) students' feedback and self-assessment.

Ask the experts. The phonology helped us review exactly what pronunciation and its various components were. The linguistic contrastive analysis helped us to articulate and anticipate problems both common and specific to our Spanish and Vietnamese speakers.

From this review of the literature, we were able to create comprehensive lists of individual and common pronunciation problems facing ESL students. This gave us preliminary information with which to work in analyzing the needs of the students in our classes. Basically, we listed problems common to most ESL students. Then we listed the problems of each of our two target groups separately (c.f. pp.21 & 22). These lists were then merged onto a master tally sheet (c.f. p. 23).

This information served as a kind of road map in guiding us where to look for potential problems. In the case of the Spanish speakers in our classes, our teaching staff was bilingual and more readily able to anticipate problems. In the case of our Vietnamese speakers, however, we were completely in the dark. All we knew is that they were trying--as were we--but comprehension and real communication was a slow, sometimes frustrating, process for all. For some of the teachers, there seemed to be hardly enough time to decode the message never mind to diagnose the reasons for its distortion. We needed outside help. Fortunately we found help. We were able to gain "inside information" on over twenty different language groups including Spanish and Vietnamese. (And guess what? We did not know all there was to know about Spanish after all.)

Ask yourself. But these lists of problems were only the beginning. There was no way of knowing if Spanish speakers and Vietnamese speakers in fact knew they were supposed to have certain problems. In other words, there are exceptions to every rule and for all we knew we had them in class. We needed a way to verify that the problems identified by the experts were in fact problems for our students. After all, it would make no sense to take valuable class time to tell students who already say "vote" not to say "bote." For this we

designed two methods: one based on teachers recording observations and the other based on students reporting personal problems.

In order for classroom teachers to expediently record their observations we decided on two methods. First, teachers could keep a collection of index cards close at hand while teaching. As significant problems arose, teachers could note the problem, the context in which it was observed, the language group(s) involved and the date. For teachers who preferred not to work with individual index cards, a single sheet of paper in a matrix format containing a kind of check list of the potential problems suggested in the research with room to make additional observations was designed. Actually, it was our tally sheet mentioned above. Since the information recorded on index cards could easily be merged onto the newly designed checklist, it could also be used to tabulate findings from various teachers and classes (c.f. pp. 24 & 25). This master "tab sheet" would be instrumental in helping us to decide our priorities.

Ask your students. In deciding which problems were most significant and needed to be addressed first, we considered not only our perspective as ESL professionals, but also that of the specific learners in our classes. The simple fact of the matter--as any experienced teacher knows-- is that if learners do not perceive a problem then either there is no problem or the teacher must first teach the existence of the problem. Call it student motivation. . . call it learner empowerment . . .call it whatever you chose. Just don't forget to call it necessary. If learners do not see a problem, most will see little need to practice its solution.

Furthermore, remembering that our goal is not to insist on native fluency, consider Kenworthy (1987) who points out that pronunciation is tied to identity and therefore the

degree to which the learner seeks to identify with the English speaking group will directly influence that learner's pronunciation. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994), building on Kenworthy's work, also note that the learner's socio-linguistic personal goals for learning the new language also influence his or her pronunciation. Learners concerned primarily with acquiring a basic "transactional" English (enabling them to meet only their most basic needs) tend to be less concerned with pronunciation than learners who wish to achieve a more "interactional" type of English. In beginning ESL classes teaching life skills within a communicative context we find students of both types. Thus, while the teacher's professional assessment is important in determining what learner needs to address, so is learners' self-assessment if instructional impact (and student retention) is to be maximized.

To elicit student feedback and self-assessment teachers were encouraged to speak and listen to students regarding pronunciation and speaking problems they were having outside the classroom and to record their findings. This process was merely an extension of the process that had begun a year before and had served as the seedling of this research project. However, in order to guarantee a more formal process of gaining input from *all* students, teachers began setting aside "special classes" (i.e. the day before a holiday break or the last day of a session) specifically for discussing speaking and pronunciation problems both inside and outside of class. During this time, students were asked to write on index cards words or phrases they had learned that were difficult for them to pronounce. They were also asked to list words and phrases that posed problems for them from the point of view of listening comprehension. The information collected was then recorded, analyzed and added to the tab sheet we had developed (c.f. pp. 24 & 25).

Choose your priorities. With students' pronunciation problems identified and tabulated, it was time to prioritize in order to determine which problems would be taught first and which could wait. Since we were dealing with beginners as well as working under "non-negotiable program constraints" (specifically time and curriculum), trade-offs would have to be made. Since we were working with a life skills curriculum, in other words real-life language that the students needed to use, classroom performance could serve as a partial guide. However, to be sure, we again turned to the literature for guidance.

Let the students' needs guide your choice. There, among the more specific sources, we found Paulston and Bruder (1976) who offered us the following: "For a beginning student, adequate pronunciation will include control of the segmental phonemes (more on this technical jargon later), statement and question intonation for simple utterances, and stress and rhythm patterns for simple utterances." If you know anything about pronunciation, then you know we were basically being told to teach everything "for simple utterances." Add to this the confusion resulting from the on-going debate among language teachers and phonologists regarding the pedagogical merits of the "bottom-up" versus the "top-down" methods. (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994)

So, there we were . . . being told that everything was important for beginners but nobody knew in what order to teach it. We had done our homework. We had gone through the proper channels and had come full circle. We decided to trust our instincts and those of our students. General classroom prominence would be given to basic intonation and stress (both word and sentence) while individual sounds would be dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994). Thus, we would need to develop activities that would be

generic and flexible in nature. They would have to be useable anywhere in the curriculum and with any language groups--not just Spanish and Vietnamese.

Selection of the solutions

Start with a wish list. We knew--or at least had an idea--what we needed to do. Now we needed to decide how we were going to do it. We knew what student problems needed to be addressed. We knew we were limited by a curriculum neither we nor the students wanted to abandon. We knew there was only so much instructional time available to help the students to meet their needs.

To help our students better meet their needs we needed pronunciation teaching activities and strategies that would have **universal appeal**. Even though our research was funded specifically for Spanish and Vietnamese speakers, we had other language groups in our classes. We did not want to create a class of guinea pigs nor did we want to ignore the needs of our other students.

We needed activities and strategies that would **respect different learning styles**. Pronunciation was a problem that most of our beginning students were experiencing. But they did not all have the same learning style. Some were clearly visual learners. Others appeared to be more auditory. Still others seemed to require more movement. We would need a little something for everyone.

We wanted activities that would be **easily integrated into existing curriculum**. After all we were teaching our learners survival English. There were no units, chapters or corners to cut. Whatever we decided upon would need to lend itself to the spur of the

moment. As pronunciation problems arose in the context of the life skills lesson, we wanted a bag of tricks to help students learn to combat them. There had to be a seamless transition from life skills lesson to pronunciation drill back to life skills lesson in the minimal amount of time.

We needed activities that would **require minimal explanation for students**. If the vocabulary or explanations were lengthy and difficult we would be defeating our major purpose in undertaking this study: we would be sacrificing our communicative life skills classes for Phonetics 101. As Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) insisted, "There is no point in teachers just telling their students that the consonant in the English word 'fee' is a voiceless labio-dental fricative."

Lastly, what we wanted and needed was a bag of tricks that any ESL teacher--regardless of formal phonological background--could learn to use. Our agency, like many institutions throughout the Commonwealth, was understaffed in terms of phonological experts. We needed something(s) user-friendly -- something that would **not require excessive staff development**.

Take stock in what you have. In light of what we knew we needed and now knew we wanted, it was time to see what we had already. Since most of the ESL teaching staff was part-time, special meeting times had to be created so that full-time day and part-time evening staff could actually sit down face to face and discuss, in light of what we had previously agreed we needed and wanted through phone calls and memos, exactly who did what and how.

Take stock in what other people have. We needed to find out what specialists in

the field of teaching pronunciation considered to be effective ways to address various problems. So once again we returned to the literature.

Use what you have and 'steal' what you don't. Taking teaching tricks of our own that had withstood the test of time and the scrutiny of the specialists, we then proceeded to adapt what was new from our research and design teaching activities that met the criteria established in our wish list.

Implementation

With the pronunciation problems and teaching activities and strategies to address them identified, it was time to shift from brainstorming outside the classroom to action inside the classroom. To this end there were still several questions to consider regarding the implementation of our ideas. **What** would we teach and **when**? **How** would we teach it and **why**?

While we intended to review and revise our enhanced pronunciation instruction, we nonetheless needed to plan proactively in order to minimize any negative results or experiences. After all, we were altering our instruction somewhat. Any unanticipated mix-ups or mistakes could, in theory, impact negatively on enrollment and retention. The research we had completed to date had shown us the light. And, like any enthusiast or new convert, we needed to avoid the pitfall of becoming a fanatic and over doing it. So we needed to proceed with caution.

What? Teach new vocabulary first, then teach pronunciation. New vocabulary represents new content to be learned by the students. Pronunciation of some of the new words and phrases may require the students to employ new skills. We needed to remember

that it is generally not a good idea to teach new content and new skills simultaneously. Though both are necessary, one will usually be sacrificed to the other. It is usually better to teach them separately using the students familiarity with the one to build confidence regarding the other (Beyer, 1987). In the case of an adult ESL class emphasizing life skills, it made more sense to teach the new vocabulary first, then use that familiarity with content to practice the skill of pronouncing.

For us this meant beginning with word recognition (listening comprehension and meaning) and sound discrimination. Once this was at least familiar to most learners, we were able to integrate some activities aimed at practicing new and/or difficult sounds as well as word stress. For sentence stress and intonation, the more difficult concepts to teach (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994), we deemed it best to wait till students had for the most part passed "familiarity" with the new vocabulary and moved onto "mastery."

When? Be flexible but, be consistent. While there is some merit to setting aside a specific portion of each instructional meeting time for pronunciation, it is not the best way to integrate it into an existing curriculum. Such compartmentalization tends to send the message that pronunciation and "rest of the class" have little to do with each other (Kenworthy, 1987). For us a better strategy seemed to be developing a generic bag of tricks that could be applied to a variety of circumstances and problems and using this bag of tricks on an as need basis. The spontaneity of momentarily zooming in on a pronunciation problem, addressing it and, then, zooming back out to the larger life skills lesson seemed to provide a more seamless integration of the two.

However, in most cases, such brevity and flexibility did not result in the immediate

elimination of the particular pronunciation problem. Therefore, it was also necessary for us to continually return to the problem--practicing the "old" solution(s) and introducing new ones--whenever the opportunity presented itself.

Why? Decide if it's 'new', 'additional practice' or 'review'? Asking ourselves "the why question before launching into a pronunciation activity helped us to keep our focus. It helped us to choose the appropriate activity and the amount of time that would be allotted for that activity. Answering "the why question" also helped us to have an appropriate plan B ready in case of disaster.

How? Keep it short and sweet! Remember it was never our original goal to re-invent Phonetics 101. We wanted to be brief. Within the context of a life skills ESL class taught with a communicative approach, **you *never* want to exceed ten minutes** of a one hour class with direct pronunciation teaching and drill. Ideally, we should try to keep it to about five minutes or so. However, once in a while a problem is common enough or serious enough to warrant the full ten minutes. But never more. The simple fact of the matter is that five to ten minutes out of one hour's worth of instructional time represents eight to sixteen percent of the total class time. Most beginning learners will need significantly more practice time in order to improve noticeably. Thus, if we exceed these suggested time constraints, we could conceivably sacrifice over twenty percent of an hour long class to teaching the learner what (s)he cannot do.

Also, because pronunciation can be so closely tied to identity and self-concept (Kenworthy, 1987; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994), we chose to **make the "zoom-ins" on pronunciation pleasurable** (if not outright humorous) for the students. To that end, when

we found ourselves in a difficult situation, we found the best thing to do was to **end on a positive note**. This can sometimes mean finding the student(s) who can "do it" or the student who does it "best," ending with him or her, and returning to do battle another day.

Review and Revision

Part of formalizing any "new" process is an on-going evaluation of its effectiveness. In the case of our "new and improved" ESL classes, we needed to be certain that the solutions we had devised to deal with our students problems were in fact solutions. To what extent? Were new problems arising? We can examine these questions by adopting a kind of "plan-meet-need" analysis in the following areas: teacher preparation and delivery, student reception and understanding, and overall effectiveness and impact of the activities (from both the students' and teachers' points of view).

Evaluate teacher preparation and delivery. Key to any successful lesson is that the teacher understand the lesson. The teacher must understand the goal of what is to be taught, how it relates to the overall instructional program and how to execute its presentation in the classroom. We decided to use **specially scheduled teacher meetings** with the project mentor and research leaders to handle the preparation of instructional staff. In a perfect world, evaluation of the teachers' deliveries would be handled by both informal peer and **formal (formative) evaluation**. Unfortunately, ours was not a perfect world and more often than not **informal peer evaluation** was logistically impossible to arrange. Thus, we relied on **teachers' self-evaluations** for much of the feedback.

Evaluate student understanding. The teacher's understanding of the lesson or activity does not guarantee that the learners will in fact understand its purpose and directions.

We needed to be certain that the newly incorporated activities and strategies were clear to students. Again, **classroom observers** (both supervisors and peers) seemed the logical answer. This, of course, requires people, time and, perhaps, money. So once again we relied heavily on the **observations of individual teachers** to the reactions of their students.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and strategies. Here we were more concerned with providing a short-run analysis of plan-meet-need from the teachers' perspective. In other words, we went back to our original wish list in step 2 "Selecting the Solutions" and asked ourselves if, in fact, what we had designed was turning out to be what we wanted. We needed to know **how closely the classroom reality corresponded to the original wish list**.

The process of review or evaluation outlined above has meaning only if we returned to the drawing board when we or the students found something that was not working as intended. After all, there was no point in troubleshooting if we had no intention of perfecting our project. Thus, we needed to **be prepared to revise as needed**. We were relatively fortunate, however. Aside from staffing problems to better insure objectivity in the evaluation process, and the need to constantly beware of not exceeding the "five to ten minute rule," the activities presented in the next part of this guide were well received by both teachers and students.

Assessment of Student Progress

Of course the fact that everybody was happy and seemed to look like they knew what they were doing and why was no guarantee that in fact student progress was being achieved. We needed a way of assessing student progress.

One means of doing this is to adopt the methods of objective observation Kenworthy (1987) outlined in her second chapter. We would simply need to be sure to **preform both pre- and post- objective observations.** Again, however, personnel, time and money can become problematic. Such was the case with our project.

We decided to use **individual teacher's observations** and **student self-assessment**. In the case of our program, the individual classroom teacher handled registration and assessment. Who better to monitor learners' progress? (Of course, this can lead one to ask, 'Who guards the guards?' Thus, if staffing, time and money are not problems we encourage a more Kenworthy-like approach to student assessment.) Finally, since it was students who brought the problems and personal experiences to our attention that led to the original grant proposal, we decided to rely on their feedback as well. They knew the results they wanted to see.

Student Empowerment

As was noted earlier, it was never the goal to eliminate the students' accents. Remember this project was designed to meet the problems and needs of beginning students. However, we did hope to **provide the opportunity to experience success** (albeit somewhat limited) in order to keep the students motivated to continue the study of their new language--both inside and outside the ESL classroom.

Beyond the classroom adult ESL students have full lives. Families, financial responsibilities, jobs, health problems, cultural adjustments . . . and the list goes on. These students will need to communicate effectively outside the classroom as quickly as possible. For many the day may come when they must discontinue their formal study of English.

However, this does not mean the end of their studying English. Precisely because they need this second language to survive, they will per force continue to study it--even if they do not realize they are doing so. Thus, they will need to become self-sufficient.

Toward realization of this goal of self-sufficiency, teachers must strive to **provide feedback as often as possible.** It is not uncommon for students to finally manage to produce a difficult sound or pronounce a word that was hard for them one day and "return to the error of their ways" the next. Teachers need to stay on top of this and **provide frequent opportunity for practice and review.** Lastly, as students begin to gain mastery over sounds, words and/or phrases that were once a problem for them, teachers need to **encourage self-correction**. We do not always want to outright tell the student the error. It is in the students' best interests to have *them* identify the error. We found the chapter on "Developing self-correcting and self-monitoring strategies" in Avery and Ehrlich (1992) to be very helpful in this regard. If we **help students develop self-monitoring strategies**, we have done much toward helping them achieve self-sufficiency.

COMMON PROBLEMS FOR SPANISH SPEAKERS LEARNING ENGLISH

--VOWELS--Spanish uses less vowel sounds than English. Consequently, Spanish speakers will have problems perceiving and producing many English vowels, e.g.:

Pull and pool
Cat and cut
Seat and sit

Also, Spanish has no reduced or neutral vowel like the English schwa. Thus, many Spanish speakers will tend to pronounce "about" like "ah-bout."

--CONSONANTS--Spanish speakers may have problems with the following English consonant sounds:

/v/ as in "vote"
/dh/ as in "mother"
/th/ as in "thin"
/j/ as in "juice"
/zh/ as in "pleasure"
/sh/ as in "shin"
/ch/ as in "chin"
/z/ as in "Tuesday"

Additionally, Spanish speakers may have a tendency to make the following sound substitutions:

--/p/,/t/ and /k/ at the beginning of words are not aspirated and therefore sound more like /b/, /d/ and /g/.

--conversely, /b/,/d/ and /g/ at the end of words are notsufficientlyy voiced and can sound like /p/,/t/ and /k/.

--/m/,/n/ and /ng/ seem to be randomly substituted for each other at the ends of words making "swim" and "swing" sound alike

--confusing or substituting the English sounds /y/ and /j/. Thus "not yet" can become "not jet" and "by jet" can become "by yet."

--/s/ plus (an)other consonant(s) at the beginning of a word will often be preceded by a vowel sound similar to the vowel in the English word "met" e.g. "eSpanish"

--consonant clusters particularly /s/ plus another consonant or /s/+consonant+/s/. Here the typical learner strategy will be to delete one (or more) of the consonant sounds. Thus, "rests" becomes "ress."

--STRESS AND RHYTHM--Spanish speakers tend to pronounce English syllables and words evenly without the typical prominencess and reductions of native speakers which can produce a monotonous effect that can exhaust listeners before the learner has fully communicated the message.

--INTONATION--Speakers of Spanish tend to use a narrower pitch range which can be interpreted by the listener as disinterest or boredom.

COMMON PROBLEMS FOR VIETNAMESE SPEAKERS LEARNING ENGLISH

--VOWELS--Vietnamese uses more vowels sounds than English. Therefore, Vietnamese students learning English tend to experience relatively few problems with the English vowel sounds.

--CONSONANTS--Experts (Swan and Smith, 1987) point out that there are many differences between Vietnamese and English consonants. Vietnamese speakers will tend to have difficulty with the following English sounds:

/f/ as in safe, laugh
/dh/ as in mother, this
/th/ as in math, thin, thumb
/z/ as in size, fries
/sh/ as in shin, shovel
/zh/ as in measure, television
/ch/ as in watch, church
/j/ as in bridge, enjoy, garage

--Also, many sounds that do exist in both English and Vietnamese are not pronounced as strongly in Vietnamese as they are in English. The result is a tendency to "swallow" or substitute consonant sounds. For example, /p/, /t/ and /k/ may not be as strongly aspirated or exploded as they are in English. Thus:

pad sounds like "ba(t) **sweep** sounds like "swee"
tall sounds like "doll" **went** sounds like "when"
come sounds like "gum" **week** sounds like "we"

--/m/ at the beginning of a word in Vietnamese is prevoiced. In other words it may be almost completely unrecognizable in English.

--Consonant clusters do not exist in Vietnamese. Most words are one syllable and fit the pattern C-V (consonant-vowel) or C-V-C. Therefore words with combinations of consonants are particularly difficult for them--especially /s/ between consonants or when preceded by a consonant at the end of a word, e.g.:

talks to becomes "taw to"
coats becomes "goat"

--STRESS--Vietnamese speakers learning English tend to render each syllable its full pronunciation. This can produce a "staccato" effect which, when combined with frequent deletion of consonants from the ends of words can make comprehension extremely difficult. Beginners will need practice linking words as well as highlighting and reducing syllables.

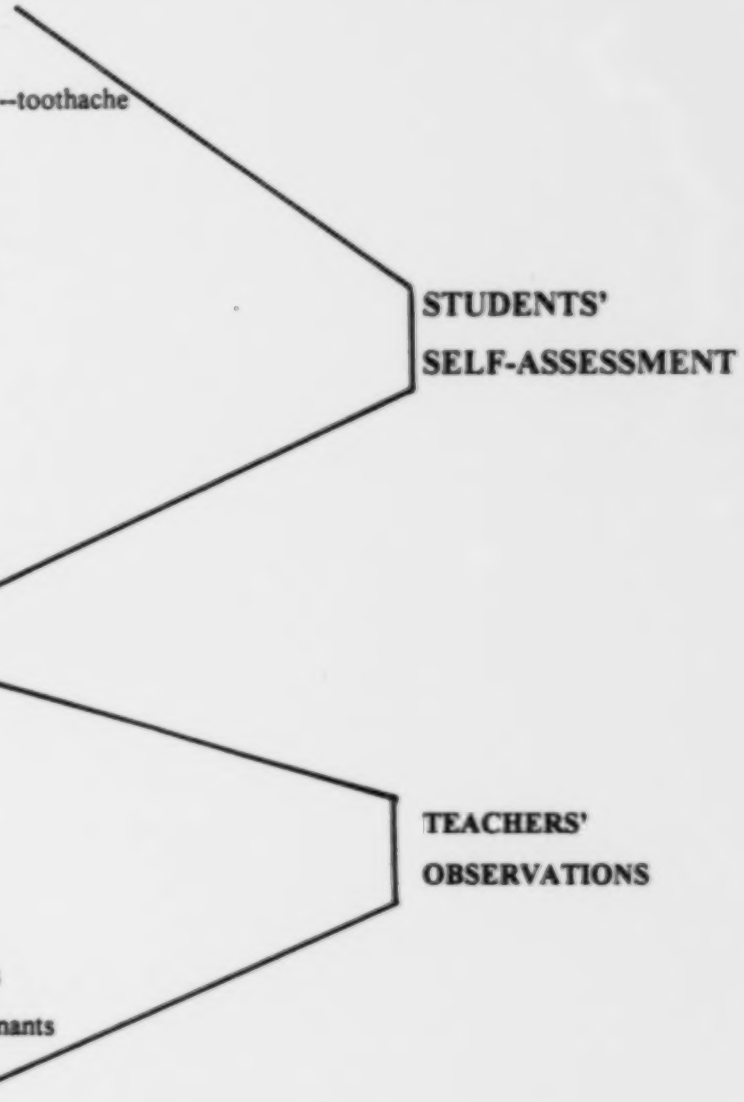
--INTONATION--Tone and voice pitch function completely differently in Vietnamese. The English concept of intonation can be very difficult to perceive and imitate. Sometimes the same word(s) spoken by two different English speakers can be unrecognizable to the Vietnamese speaking listener. Vietnamese students of English will need a lot of patient practice with English intonation.

ESL PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS ID WORKSHEET

PROBLEM	DATE	SPANISH	VIET.	OTHER	OTHER

PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS OF BEGINNING STUDENTS

1. full--fool--fall
2. pull--pool
3. Tuesday--Thursday--toothache
4. waiting--wedding
5. boss--bus
6. work--walk--word
7. 13--30
8. 15--50
9. shin--chin
10. ankle--uncle
11. thumb
12. dizzy
13. mixed-up
14. /t/ and /d/
15. /th/ and /dh/
16. /s/ and /z/
17. /v/
18. /r/
19. /r/ and /l/
20. consonant clusters
21. final voiced consonants
22. /s/ and /th/



ESL PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS ID WORKSHEET

PROBLEM	DATE	SPANISH	VIET.	OTHER	OTHER
Vowel Discrimination		X			
/f/			X		
/v/		X			
/dh/		X	X		
/th/		X	X		
/j/		X	X		
/zh/		X	X		
/sh/		X	X		
/ch/		X	X		
/z/		X	X		
initial /p/, /t/, /k/		X	X		
final /b/, /d/, /g/		X	X		
initial /m/			X		
final /m/, /n/, /ng/		X			
initial consonant clusters w/ /s/		X			
final consonant clusters w/ /s/		X	X		
Stress		X	X		
Intonation		X	X		

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PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY FOR LAYMEN

As one of its primary goals, this project sought to include basic, "user-friendly" information for the ESL practitioner on phonetics and phonology. This information would serve as the backdrop to which the less phonetically and less phonologically versed practitioner could turn in order to easily and expediently integrate the pronunciation activities that follow into his or her classes. Indeed volumes and volumes have been written on these subjects. Many of the more recent and--we believe--the best of these, are featured in the annotated resource listing that follows this section.

We embarked upon this research fully aware that programs face immutable realities: not the least of which are funding, time and staffing. Thus, throughout the project we were guided by the desire to simplify. Our guiding principle was that "less is more." However, we are aware that it can be argued that "a *little* knowledge is a dangerous thing." Hence, the inclusion of the resources list that follows to aid those practitioners and programs who want or need more information.

One final caveat: much of the information that follows is necessary information for teachers but not for learners. As Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) noted, "there is an important distinction to be made between what is important for the teacher in training and what is useful for learners in the classroom." In other words, while this "stuff" can be really interesting in its proper time and place, don't sacrifice your beginning ESL life skills curriculum to long, lengthy sermons on sound and speech production.

Lesson One: What's the difference . . .? Unless you plan to regularly attend cocktail parties frequented by linguists, the difference between phonetics and phonology is

not important for what you do with the learners. However, the difference between segments and suprasegmentals is important.

Segments refer to the individual sounds of a language. These individual sounds fall into two basic categories: consonants and vowels. **Suprasegmentals** refer to the features of a spoken language that go beyond the mere production of individual sounds. In other words, suprasegmentals deal with combinations of segments: words and groups of words (connected speech). Suprasegmentals include word stress, sentence stress and rhythm, and intonation.

Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) offer an excellent analysis of the inverse relationship between the importance of each to comprehension and their 'teachability.' In a nutshell, what they found was that the stuff most important to comprehension (suprasegmentals) is the hardest to teach--especially to beginners--whereas, the "easy stuff" to teach (segments) generally interferes least with effective communication. Oh-oh. That wasn't what we wanted to hear. Now what? Do we forget about it? NO!

Avery and Ehrlich (1992) point out that "while practice in pronunciation may not make perfect, ignoring pronunciation totally can be a great disservice to ESL students." Fortunately, along with their "bad news," Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) offered what we found to be a reasonable compromise for teachers working with beginning ESL students: focus on stress. . . word stress and sentence stress. However, as teachers of beginning ESL students, we've got students adding, deleting, substituting and outright mispronouncing key sounds in words thereby rendering those words unrecognizable. We need to take a closer look at segments as well as suprasegmentals.

Lesson Two: Segments. Segments, as we stated earlier, are the individual sounds

of the language that are divided into two groups--consonants and vowels. **Consonants** are produced using either the lips, tongue and/or teeth (or some combination thereof) to block the emerging breath. Consonant sounds that require the use of the vocal chords are called **voiced** consonants. (e.g., /d/, /g/, /b/) Consonants that do not require the use of the vocal chords are referred to as **voiceless** consonants. Voiceless consonant sounds that are released with a puff of air are called **aspirated**. (e.g., /t/, /k/, /p/) Groups of consecutive consonants found either within a particular word or created by the connecting of two words in regular speech are known as **consonant clusters**. (e.g., walks or gets down) (c.f. p. 40)

Vowels differ from consonants in two significant ways. Firstly, they are all voiced. That is to say the use of the vocal chords is required to produce vowel sounds. Secondly, in the production of vowel sounds, air flows relatively unobstructed through the mouth. The air is not blocked by the lips, teeth or tongue as is the case with consonants. (c.f. p. 41)

There are--depending upon regional accents and who does the counting--anywhere from 16 to 22 different vowel sounds in English. What distinguishes the different vowel sounds is the height of the tongue (high, mid, low), its position in the mouth (front, center, back) and the shape of the lips (rounded or spread). Some vowel sounds are longer or tense requiring more effort to produce the sounds. Others are called short or lax since they require less effort to produce. The most common vowel sound in spoken English is called the schwa (/ə/). Commonly found in the unstressed syllables of English words, it is the neutral vowel sound you hear in words like "doctor," "teacher" and "about." This neutral or reduced vowel sound is absolutely essential to the stress and rhythm of English. It is NOT slang or sloppy speech.

One final note about the segments. "B-ee" is the letter. The sound produced by the lips touching while a voiced breath escapes is the segment or **phoneme**. While vowel phonemes generally maintain purity or a singular distinct sound, such is not the case for consonants. When produced in words (a series of phonemes) or utterances (a series of words), consonant phonemes can alter slightly due to **positional variance**. In other words, where a consonant sound is in a particular word or utterance and/or the letters surrounding it can alter its sound somewhat. For example, the phoneme /t/ has three different sounds in the following words: top (strong aspiration), butter (almost sounds like /d/) and but (almost no air is released unlike in top.) These positional variations of phonemes are called **allophones**. Be on the look out for them. Native speakers generally have no problem distinguishing them. As a matter of fact, you may not even hear them at all (c.f. Activity 1). For ESL students, however, allophones can be very confusing.

Lesson Three: Suprasegmentals. Suprasegmentals include everything involved in stringing individual phonemes together to form words, then, individual words to form utterances that communicate message with feeling. Basically what we are talking about is stress, rhythm, linking and intonation.

Stress is a property both of syllables within words and of words within sentences. The syllable or word(s) articulated longer, louder and with a higher pitch of voice is stressed. Within words of many syllables in English, it is possible for three levels of stress to exist: primary, secondary and tertiary.

In sentences, stress is given to those words deemed most essential by the speaker in order to communicate his or her message effectively. Stress or **prominence** (Dalton and

Seidlhofer, 1994) is given to such words while others, deemed of lesser importance by the speaker, are **reduced** or spoken faster with less attention paid to clear articulation. Generally speaking, **content words** (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and interrogatives) receive prominence or stress in English while **function words** (grammatical necessities such as pronouns, articles and prepositions) are reduced. Note, however, that this is a generalization. If the speaker wants to communicate the message that "The bank is NEAR Elm Street" (not on Elm Street) then all bets are off regarding the aforementioned "rule."

This alternation of strong and weak (or clear and unclear as some ESL students perceive it) is what gives English its characteristic **rhythm** or timing. Without it, messages can become unintelligible. It is important to emphasize to ESL students that the evenly pronounced "A-BOUT" is not "a-BOUT" just as "THE DOC-TOR IS NOT IN HIS OFF-ICE" is not "The DOCtor's NOT in his OFFice."

Many students will need practice with this idea of timing in English. Recall that the stressed syllable or word in English is longer, louder and higher in pitch. Such is not the case in many other languages where only loudness and pitch--not length--determine stress. Thus, the tendency for many beginning learners to speak with an even-paced "choppiness" or staccato-like rhythm that, at best, tries the listener's patience.

Linking results in part from the necessities of needing to reduce certain words in English in order to maintain proper stress. It is basically the process by which words are joined together in spoken English. Often times what occurs is that the letter(s) from the end of one word are joined to the next word. . . a classic example being "What sup?" for "What's up?" However, it can also be achieved by inserting sounds, deleting sounds or substituting

sounds in order to create smooth transitions between words. For beginning learners, it is generally considered to be a somewhat difficult process to master. However, they should be exposed to it in terms of their ability to understand it and to realize that it is not "sloppy" or bad English.

Intonation, like stress and reduction, contributes to the "music" of English. While stress has often been likened to rhythm in music, intonation is often called the melody of English. Intonation uses recognized patterns of voice pitch to convey meaning. It is intonation that can enable a sentence to function as a question. For example, if you say "The doctor's not in his office" and your voice drops in tone on the word office, you have stated a fact. If, however, your voice rises when you say the word "office," you have just asked a question. That's intonation: the rising and falling tones of a speakers voice.

Basically, your tone of voice can go up (rise), go down (fall) or stay the same (level). However, there are combinations as well. A speakers voice can fall and then rise and/or vice versa. Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) note that intonation is used to communicate a number of messages ranging from what's important to social dominance between or among speakers engaged in a conversation. As a result, patterns of intonation can be quite difficult to teach beginning ESL students. Much of it is situational. Thus, it is best to keep in simple at first. Show them when their voice needs to rise, when it needs to fall and leave it at that. . . at least for the moment.

Thus ends our brief course in phonetics and phonology. Remember, in a life skills communicative classroom, beginning ESL students do not need to know most of what you just read. Now, on to the classroom strategies and activities

TEN TIPS FOR TEACHING PRONUNCIATION IN ESL CLASSES

1. Integrate the teaching of pronunciation into your every class. Be consistent.

2. **Never** teach new and/or difficult pronunciation skills with vocabulary that is new or unfamiliar to your students. Always use familiar content (vocabulary) to teach unfamiliar skills (pronunciation).

3. "Correct correctly," i.e., use good judgement, care, encouragement and honesty. The goal should be to achieve communicative comprehension **NOT** to eliminate all traces of an accent from the student's first language.

4. Identify and prioritize major problems in pronunciation. Limit yourself (and the class) to attainable goals.

5. Remember that many pronunciation problems of ESL students are the result of "not hearing the sound" because it does not exist in their first language(s). Students must be able to hear a sound before it can be reproduced verbally. This means you may need to practice listening comprehension first.

6. Listen to your students. Listen to yourself. Just as the secret of good pronunciation from the students depends on hearing sounds accurately, so too does the secret of good pronunciation teaching lie in accurately hearing student problems. Listen to and note specific (recurring) problems of sound substitutions, deletions and insertions as well as problems with stress, rhythm and tone of voice.

7. Keep pronunciation activities "short and sweet." Never teach pronunciation for more than 5 or 10 minutes at a time. And make it fun with lots of exaggerated "funny faces," movement and voice variation.

8. Always use the familiar to teach the unfamiliar. If /v/ is a problem but /f/ isn't, start with /f/.

9. Always teach pronunciation within the context of "real language" and meaningful communication. Don't "zoom-in"and teach the /sp/ consonant blend and forget to "zoom-out" to its use in "real English." You will end up with a class that can spit perfectly in English, but will still ask, "Jew espeak espanich?"

10. Never miss a chance to review. Improving pronunciation is something many students will spend the rest of their lives doing.

ESSENTIAL ENGLISH VOCABULARY FOR TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

Teaching pronunciation to beginning ESL students need not involve the a priori teaching of difficult, highly technical phonetic and phonological terms and concepts. In fact, all the basics of individual sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation can easily be presented and practiced with just the following basic vocabulary:

MOUTH	**TOP**	**HIGH**	**LESS**
TONGUE	**BOTTOM**	**LOW**	
TEETH	**FRONT**	**STRONG**	
LIP(S)	**BACK**	**WEAK**	
THROAT	**MIDDLE**	**NEAR**	
AIR	**ON**	**MORE**	

"Throat" is the way we found best to describe voiced sounds. Of course, "voice" or "no voice" *could* be equally effective. However, when working with beginners, we found "throat" easier to explain than "voice." By the same token, "air" was the term we adopted to teach beginners about aspirated and unaspirated sounds. It was our experience that these were concepts they could easily understand and vocabulary they would have learned anyway. Since none of our students planned to pursue careers as phoneticists or phonologists, there seemed little point in making the explanation any more complicated. This basic vocabulary, combined with an on-going, imaginative and energetic use of various of the activities listed below produced immediate (i.e., within the course of a ten week session) gains in most learners' pronunciation.

RECOMMENDED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

As any skilled classroom teacher knows, a good eye, a good ear, sensitivity and flexibility are the secrets of the trade. There is no magic wand . . . no one solution that works with every one all the time. There is, however, a bag of "magic tricks" that, with proper timing, can actually help "work magic." The following is a list and brief description of some of these tricks proven to yield positive results with beginning ESL students:

1. "Singinin da showa" Many errors in pronunciation are the result of interference from the first language (Avery and Ehrlich, 1992). Students will perceive sounds in English through the "filter" of their native language. Sounds that do not exist in the native language will often either go unnoticed or be misperceived. Their ear simply is not trained to listen for it. And if they can't hear it, they cannot reproduce it (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994).

Add to this the confusion that can arise from allophones as well as the various inserted, deleted and reduced sounds characteristic of spoken English, and you have a real mess from the point of view of the learner. But you, the teacher don't see the problem. Worse yet, you probably don't hear the problem. In order to help students with many of their pronunciation problems, you need to hear what they hear. One way to approach this problem is to research your own contrastive analysis of English and the students' first languages. But this will tell you more what they don't hear.

To help **you** better hear what the students hear, use music to train your ear. Ever get the words to a song wrong? Probably. Many people do. To better train your ear to the nuances of English that you take for granted but that confuse your students, start listening to music more closely. In fact, start singing along. The singing will help you actually hear those

mistakes. Then ask yourself why or how you goofed. Why did you think that "promised you" was "promise to you?" What exactly made you mistake "stolen lies" for "stone and light?" And what about those words you can't quite catch . . .? Check out the lyrics and then re-listen to the song. Your students are having the same problems you are--except in their case, every new conversation is a new song.

2. "Zoom-in . . . Zoom-out" on problem sounds in words or phrases. In other words, when you become aware of a problem, isolate it--aurally as well as visually on the board. Aurally, move in on the sound. Repeat it. Have students repeat it. If you see that students are confusing the target sound(s) with other sound(s), then you will need to practice some sound discrimination first. If you're approaching your "five to ten minute" time limit, end for the day in the most positive way possible and return to the problem again (briefly) in the next class. Once the students can hear a difference, even if they are unable to reproduce it, then you're ready to show them how to do it.

Now use graphic symbols at the board--phonetic spellings or simple diagrams depicting the position of the mouth. Then back out slowly to the original word or phrase that triggered the zoom-in. Sounds occur in language and language occurs within real life communicative contexts. Zooming in helps make the pronunciation better, but zooming back out makes the whole exercise relevant.

Remember, pronunciation is not meant to take up the lion's share of the allotted instructional time. What has just been described can and should happen in a matter of minutes. If it's a big problem, it will have to be dealt with slowly and consistently. Make a note of it and return to it another day.

Lastly, never zoom in on a problem in the last five minutes of class. If you are unable to "resolve" it, students will leave on a negative note.

3. "Making Faces" after explaining the formation of a problem sound, use humor to demonstrate it. Exaggerate and have fun. For example, top teeth on bottom lip like a woodchuck for /v/ or tongue between the teeth for /th/ as in teeth and thumb. Humor relieves tension. And learning or practicing pronunciation can be a tense experience for some learners. Don't do this on the first day though. Wait till you have their trust. Unless your an expert on multicultural non-verbal communication, you run the risk of inadvertently offending someone. It's best perhaps to wait until they know you well enough to know that you mean no offense.

4. "Drawing on the right side of your mouth" Have the students draw and label (or simply label a teacher prepared diagram) of the mouth position for a difficult sound. The very act of drawing helps right dominant global learners to learn better. It can also be an excellent exercise in listening comprehension as well as review of "body vocabulary!" This activity can be particularly helpful for vowels since their formation can be difficult to see. Treat the diagram like a map. Query the students: where's the tongue? High? Low? Etc. . .

5. "Tuning up . . . mi, mi, mi" Use exaggerated voice to practice difficult vowels or consonant clusters. Practice a new or difficult vowel by vocally gliding between familiar vowels. In other words, let your voice slide from "ee" to "oo" to "aah." Just like one of those background singers in the songs you listened to in activity number one. Once again, depending on class and teacher, humor can enter the picture. So much the better. If you've done your homework and researched some of the differences between the students'

language(s) and English, you'll be able to use what they already know to vocally locate problem sounds. If you don't have the time or resources to conduct your own contrastive analysis, substitute the diagrams above. Then use the life skills lesson to practice and drill the newly discovered sound(s).

You can also practice a difficult consonant cluster by zooming-in on its individual components, exaggerating their individual sounds and then running these sounds together faster and faster each time.

Incidentally, this technique can also help learners to expand their pitch range thereby improving intonation.

6. **"Writing for the ear"** allows you to help the students by writing what a problematic word or phrase sounds like next to its correct spelling. Be sure to develop a system or code for distinguishing between correct spelling from sound, for example:

What did you say? [whaja sei?]

BE SURE students know that brackets indicate sound and pronunciation--not spelling. And, do not use the phonetic alphabet. (Although Underhill (1994) makes a convincing case for the utilization of her charted version of the international phonetic alphabet, we find it difficult for both ESL teachers and beginning learners to integrate into a communicative life skills class.) Your poor students--if they are indeed beginners in a life skills class-- have problems enough without having to learn the phonetic alphabet. Develop your own or use "ours." (c.f. p. 40) Ours is an adapted version of material presented in the 1985 Laubach Literacy Trainer's Handbook.) The only rule, aside from the caveat listed above, is that it should be easy for both you and your students to master quickly.

7. "Peekaboo" Often students are staring at a word on the board or in their text and desperately trying to pronounce it correctly. Many times if you cover the word or tell them not to look, but simply to listen, the frustration disappears and the pronunciation improves. This is particularly true for students whose first language has a closer sound /letter correspondence than English. It can also help many students if the teacher does not look directly at them. Let them observe your mouth while you model the sound, but turn slightly. . . or, have them cover their eyes and just listen. The point is to divide the "listening" and "looking" necessary to learn to produce a particular sound or sounds into two separate activities.

8. "Death by sound." A variation of hangman. Class v. teacher. Instead of words with missing letters, teacher uses a list of words containing commonly confused sounds. For example, /ch/ in cheat, /sh/ in sheet, /j/ in judge and /zh/ in television. Students or teams of students must correctly identify the particular sound in question from a list of possible answers on the board or lose a body part to the hangman. You could throw in correct spelling as part of the challenge and have an excellent end-of-unit vocabulary review. Or, you can save it for a lighter lesson on a pre-holiday party day.

9. "LOTTO" A Bingo variation that allows the class to practice recognizing problematic sounds or reduced words in connected speech. Using materials already covered in class, students design their own Bingo-type card or lottery ticket and then listen as the teacher or a visiting conversational aide reads material in "regular" conversational English.

10. "Sound Summit" employs cooperative learning so that student experts who have no problem in one area help those who do and vice versa. For example, Spanish speakers

helping Vietnamese with /f/ and Vietnamese helping Spanish speakers with /v/. It's cooperative learning. It's multicultural. It's student empowerment. And, most importantly, it works.

11. "Voice Punctuation" allows students to practice with intonation by using only spoken clues to decide on proper punctuation or mood of particular utterances. The spoken clues should be recently learned words and phrases or review material from the life skills curriculum. Students can work in pairs or in groups with two sets flash cards--one containing the utterances with punctuation for the speaker and another containing just punctuation mark for the listener. The idea being for the punctuation cards of those listening to match the punctuation marks of those speaking. Naturally, as with any cooperative learning activity, the teacher will want to monitor the pairs or groups as well as provide some sort of final summary review or closure. Intonation is tricky and we wouldn't want the learners reinforcing their own mistakes!

12. "P.M.: Props and Movement" aspiration, stress, rhythm and intonation are difficult, yet necessary, concepts to teach beginning ESL students. Whenever possible use matches, lighters, tissues, elastics, mirrors, hand clapping, tapping, conductor-like hand movements . . . anything visual and/or moving to demonstrate and reinforce the aural aspects of these concepts. Aspiration can be demonstrated using matches, lighters or even tissue. Elastics can vividly illustrate the concepts of stress and reduction. Flap your arms, hands, fingers -- whatever works for you--to teach word and sentence stress as well as intonation. And let the students in on the action too.

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THE SOUNDS OF ENGLISH--CONSONANTS

Sounds		Examples	Formation
ALC	**IPA**		
/b/	b	**b**ad, ro**bb**er, ro**b**	Lips touching; throat
/p/	p	**p**en, che**p**er, sto**p**	Lips touching; air
/t/	t	**t**op, bu**tt**er, eigh**t**	Tongue on top teeth; air
/d/	d	**d**og, la**dd**er, si**de**	Tongue on top teeth; throat
/k/	k	**c**oin, **c**kel, ban**k**	Back of tongue on top of mouth; air
/g/	g	**g**o, bi**gg**er, le**g**	Back of tongue on top of mouth; throat
/ch/	ʧ	**ch**eap, tea**ch**er, **ch**urch	Teeth almost touching; tongue on top of mouth; air
/j/	ʤ	**j**uice, so**ld**ier, ga**g**e	Teeth almost touching; tongue on top of mouth; throat
/f/	f	**f**at, **f**ifty, la**ugh**	Top teeth on bottom lip; air
/v/	v	**v**an, mo**v**er, fi**ve**	Top teeth on bottom lip; throat
/th/	θ	**th**in, au**th**ority, ma**th**	Tongue between teeth; air
/dh/	ð	**th**is, mo**th**er, ba**th**e	tongue between teeth; throat
/s/	s	**s**ee, **s**ister, Mi**ss**	Teeth almost together, tongue resting on bottom teeth; air
/z/	z	**z**oo, la**z**y, goe**s**	Teeth almost together, tongue resting on bottom teeth; throat
/sh/	ʃ	**sh**ure, wa**sh**er, wi**sh**	Teeth almost touching, tongue in middle of mouth; air
/zh/	ʒ	televi**s**ion, plea**s**ure	Teeth almost touching , tongue in middle of mouth; throat
/m/	m	**m**an, su**mm**er, na**m**e	Lips touching; voice through nose
/n/	n	**kn**ow, fu**nn**y , so**n**	Mouth open, tongue on top of mouth; voice through nose
/ng/	ŋ	si**ng**, si**ng**ing	Mouth open, back of tongue on top of mouth; voice through nose
/l/	l	**l**ight, wa**ll**et, **l**abel	Mouth open, tongue on top teeth; voice
/r/	r	**r**ead, a**r**ight, sto**r**e	Curve tongue on top of mouth; voice
/w/	w	**qu**ick, **wh**at, **o**ne	Round lips; voice
/h/	h	**h**eight, **h**ome, **h**ood, **h**at, **h**it, **h**ot	Mouth open; air (Vowel sound that follows determines shape of mouth)
/y/	j	**y**ellow, **y**ou, **y**es	Front of tongue down, middle of tongue up; voice

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THE SOUNDS OF ENGLISH--VOWELS

(Adapted from Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994)

VOWEL	EXAMPLE
iy	green
ɪ	pink
ey	gray
ɛ	red
æ	black
ay	sky
aw	brown
oy	turquoise
ər	purple
ʌ	mustard
ə	tomato
uw	blue
ʊ	wood
ow	yellow
ɔ	auburn
ɑ	olive

VOWEL POSITION

The chart below illustrates the inter-relationship of various vowel sounds and the location of the tongue necessary for their formation. Given this information, it is possible to teach students new or difficult vowel sounds by gliding between two or more familiar vowel sounds to discover the new one(s). The principle is no more difficult than shifting the gears on a car. Remember, that in addition to tongue position (front, center, back) and height (top, middle, bottom), you will also need to pay attention to the shape of the lips (spread or rounded).

TONGUE POSITION	FRONT	CENTER	BACK
TOP	Pete		pool
	pit		pull
MIDDLE	pail	away	pour
	pet	up	pole
BOTTOM	pat		Paul

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SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Avery, P. and Ehrlich, S. (1992). Teaching American English Pronunciation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

An excellent resource for the teaching of pronunciation in ESL classes. Divided into three parts, the book offers basic introductory information on the English sound system in contrast to the sound systems of other languages, tips on how to identify and correct common pronunciation problems for 14 specific language groups (Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Hindi and Punjabi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Vietnamese), as well as suggested activities for the teaching of pronunciation from experienced university level ESL teachers. Seemingly intended to be used as a teachers' training text, this book offers clear explanations and examples. However, in its progression, it tends to assume a certain mastery of basic "phonological jargon."

Baker, A. and Goldstein, S. (1990). Pronunciation Pairs: An Introductory Course for Students of English. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The introductory course presented in this text is not intended for "introductory" i.e., beginning ESL students. The text presents very simple yet complete lessons on pronouncing English. However, the communicative tasks and "real life survival" English are minimized as they are not the intent of the book. While the book is much better appreciated by more advanced students with less pressing needs, it can still serve as an excellent teacher resource--either as a guide for the more novice teacher of English pronunciation or as supplemental material for the more experienced teacher looking for a little something different.

Beisbier, Beverly (1994). Sounds Great: Beginning Pronunciation for Speakers of English: Book 1. Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.

While this text and its accompanying cassette are excellent materials for the teaching of beginning pronunciation, they are not necessarily intended for beginning ESL learners in a life skills class. While offering communicative and interactive drills featuring "real life" English, it is a text for a pronunciation class for students who have already mastered at least an elementary level of the language.

Beyer, Barry K. (1987). Practical Strategies for the Teaching of Thinking. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

An excellent teacher training book written to help teachers structure and plan lessons that effectively teach and reinforce mastery of both content and skills.

Brightman, Dee (1983). How to Understand Conversational Speech. Washington, DC: Cross International Infotransfer Systems.

While intended as a manual for intermediate and advanced ESL students and much too difficult to be used in a beginning ESL class, this book is an excellent resource for the novice teacher of pronunciation. It offers a concise, relatively uncomplicated synopsis of the rules governing pronunciation of American English.

Clarey, M. Elizabeth and Dixson, Robert J. (1963). Pronunciation Exercises in English. Revised edition. New York, NY: Regents Publishing Company, Inc.

A good example of how **not** to teach pronunciation to beginners. Nonetheless, as a teachers' resource the book is not without merit. In relatively easy to understand terms, the book can help teachers gain insight into the actual formation of basic sounds as well as some general pronunciation problems students experience.

Dalton, Christiane and Seidlhofer, Barbara (1994). Pronunciation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A highly recommended teachers' resource for not only gaining a better understanding of the basic components of pronunciation, but also acquiring practical, easily transferable pronunciation teaching tips and activities. Generally avoiding unnecessary "linguistic lingo," this book is very informative, readable, and includes more than 120 classroom activities that teachers can adapt to their own specific needs.

Dixon, Carol N. and Nessel, Denise (1983). Language Experience Approach to Reading (and Writing). Hayward, CA: The Alemany Press.

Although not specifically dedicated to the teaching of pronunciation in beginning ESL classes, Chapter 5, "Word Recognition" contains a very useful and concise listing of common as well as individual problem areas for speakers of 21 different languages (Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Indonesian, Farsi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Navajo, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese).

Doff, A. (1988). Teach English: A Training Course for Teachers (Trainer's Handbook). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chapter 10, "Teaching Pronunciation," offers beginning ESL teachers the very basics of the mechanics of pronunciation, its teaching, and, more importantly, guidelines to help insure its effective integration into a more communicative curriculum.

Gilbert, J. B. (1993). Clear Speech: Pronunciation and Listening Comprehension in American English Teacher's Resource Book. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

While very good classroom tools (student's book, teacher's resource book and cassette), material is suited more for an intermediate or advanced class dealing strictly with pronunciation. Contains very little materials that adapt easily to the needs of a beginning ESL class focusing on life skills. However, can be used as a teacher's

resource or staff development materials for teachers with little or no background in various aspects of pronunciation teaching.

Graham, Carolyn (1978). Jazz Chants. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wonderfully entertaining classroom materials (student book, teacher's manual and cassette) suitable to the practice of rhythm and intonation in connected speech. Easily useable with all levels of learners. However, before deciding to use these materials, teachers would be wise to consider carefully the immediate needs of their learners as well as the time constraints under which their particular programs may operate. The entertaining aspect of these materials has relatively little to do with a life skills curriculum. It may be best for teachers of low level learners with pressing immediate needs and a minimum of instructional time in which to address these needs to restrict use of this material to "once in a while for a change of pace."

Griffee, Dale T. and Hough, David (1986). HearSay: Survival Listening and Speaking. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley Publishers Japan Ltd.

Provides some excellent activities for listening comprehension practice within the context of adult life skills. However, in its presentation of pronunciation, it relies on a student and teacher understanding of the international phonetic alphabet. A good resource for supplemental classroom activities.

Kenworthy, Joanne (1987). Teaching English Pronunciation. New York, NY: Longman Publishing.

Perhaps the best of the resources reviewed in this project for the beginning or less experienced teacher of second language pronunciation. Logically presents and clearly explains basic concepts and terms of pronunciation and pronunciation teaching. Offers comprehensive scope with clear, concise delivery. Can provide the less phonologically literate practitioner with the foundation necessary to effectively and expediently tackle other, more "technical" resources mentioned in this guide. Also provides a limited contrastive analysis of spoken English with nine other languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Spanish and Turkish).

Morley, Joan (1979). Improving Spoken English: An Intensive Personalized Program in Perception, Pronunciation, Practice in Context. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

As the title would suggest, not a book for beginning students. However, as is often the case, a more advanced student book can be a good place for the novice teacher to begin and such is the case here. Offsetting its sometimes technical explanations, the book offers helpful and valuable drawings and diagrams.

Paulston, Christina Bratt and Bruder, Mary Newton (1976). Teaching English as a Second Language: Techniques and Procedures. Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers, Inc.

Chapter on pronunciation provides some useful background information for the ESL teacher. However, presupposes a "more than beginner" familiarity with the technical jargon of phonetics and phonology. Information presented is not easily integrated into beginning ESL classes focusing on a life skills curriculum. Information provided is best reserved for more advanced ESL classes specializing in pronunciation.

Royce, Sherry (1994). 1994 ABLE Curriculum Guide: A Resource Listing for ESL Practitioners. Pennsylvania Department of Education: 353, PA 99-4016.

An excellent guide to ESL materials in general and, as such, aptly demonstrates the lack of materials available for the teaching of pronunciation to beginning ESL students.

Sadow, Stephen A. (1987). "Speaking and Listening: Imaginative Activities for the Language Class." in Rivers, Wilga M., editor (1987). Interactive Language Teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

While not directly concerned with the mechanics of pronunciation teaching, this resource does offer teachers some interesting ideas for classroom activities that would afford learners the opportunity to practice pronunciation within the meaningful context of a life skills curriculum as well as some valuable insights into the correction of student errors.

Swan, Michael and Smith, Bernard (1987). Learner English. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

An extraordinarily compact yet detailed resource offering contrastive analysis of English with nineteen other language groups (Dutch, Scandinavian tongues, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Catalan, Portuguese, Greek, Russian, Farsi, Arabic, Turkish, Asian sub-continental languages, West African languages, Swahili, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai). The analysis presented in this book includes not only the sound systems of the various languages, but also major differences in grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation and vocabulary. Unfortunately, producing such a wealth of useful information in such a small amount of space resulted in a heavy reliance on "technical jargon." It may need to be approached slowly and carefully, or perhaps, after reviewing one of the more basic resources offered in this list. A very valuable resource, but not for the less experienced with little or no time to digest it.

Trager, Edith Crowell and Henderson, Sara Cook (1956). The PD's: Pronunciation Drills for Learners of English. Culver City, CA: English Language Services.

Presents pronunciation as something to be learned in a vacuum--completely divorced from vocabulary and skills necessary for basic survival. Nonetheless, this book is a handy little teachers' resource for its lists of practice words for each of the different sounds in English. If you've identified a sound your learners need to practice but are having a hard time developing a list of words to compare, contrast and practice, this

book could help.

Underhill, Adrian (1994). Sound Foundations. Oxford, England: Heinemann Publishers, Ltd.

Very good collection of "discovery activities" for all level of learners. Part One focuses on the teacher as learner. In simple, relatively jargon-free English, the basics of pronunciation are discovered by and explained to the teacher. In Part Two, the background knowledge from Part One is translated into useful classroom activities appropriate for all levels of students. However, the book does give emphasis to teaching (at least to some minimal degree) the phonetic alphabet. Teachers able to read between the lines and adapt the author's ideas will not find this a problem. Many of the discovery activities suggested will appeal to learners with a more kinesthetic type of learning style.

Underhill, Nic (1987). Testing Spoken Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Excellent guide to the "How to's" of spoken language assessment--including pronunciation and its role in second language assessment. Remember, if you're going to teach it, you've got to test it too.

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APPENDIX

FINAL REPORT

Statement of the Problem

At its inception, this project sought to address a fourfold problem regarding the teaching of pronunciation in beginning ESL classes:

1. ESL learners were complaining that they not only needed to learn what to say in beginning life skills classes, but also how to say it. Students reported having difficulties being understood outside the instructional setting. Consequently, they were hesitating to experiment with their new language. Thus, the underlying rationale for attending an ESL class in the first place was being compromised.
2. Concerned and responsive teachers seeking to address the needs of these students were forced to confront the fact that they lacked the preparation and materials necessary to do so.
3. Further compounding the situation was the fact that instructional materials currently available did not explicitly address the needs of either group. In the case of the students, that which was available was not geared for beginners and sacrificed the teaching of life skills to the teaching of pronunciation. For the teachers, there seemed to be little available in the form of staff development resources that did not require prior knowledge of phonology.
4. Lastly, there was no established process whereby teachers unfamiliar with phonology could develop pronunciation practice for beginning ESL learners that was curriculum relevant.

The identification of the above fourfold problem led directly to the articulation of the following four needs: a) In class pronunciation practice for beginning ESL learners, b) A practical guidebook that would give teachers and tutors the preparation and materials necessary to provide beginning students with this practice, c) dissemination of these materials to those ESL practitioners who needed them and d) an established methodology by which practitioners in the future would become empowered to meet their own specific local and/or program needs.

Goals and Objectives of this Study

The goal of this study was to develop a guidebook for ESL practitioners and to make the contents of this guidebook available to teachers and tutors. The guidebook would contain the basic "how to" of teaching pronunciation in beginning ESL classes, sample classroom activities, a list of resources and a methodology that would allow programs and practitioners to tailor the process to specific local needs.

The eight objectives of this study were as follows: 1) Identify significant pronunciation problems experienced by Spanish and Vietnamese speaking learners, 2) Review selected resources on phonology and the teaching of pronunciation, 3) Based on the problems identified and the review of the literature, develop short classroom activities and teaching strategies that incorporated easily into an adult life skills curriculum, 4) Use these activities at least four beginning ESL classes with a minimum of fifteen students each, 5) Review and revise activities as needed, 6) Write and print the guidebook, 7) Write and submit the final report and 8) Disseminate the information from this project as appropriate.

Procedures

Using teacher action research as its methodology, teachers and students identified relevant pronunciation problems in beginning ESL classes. They reviewed selected resources on phonology and pronunciation in collaborative learning circles consisting of the teachers and the project director (mentor). They developed activities and teaching strategies from the review of these materials and considering the pronunciation problems identified. Four teachers used these activities and strategies in sixteen ESL classes--twelve of which were beginning ESL classes. Based upon both teacher and student opinions, the activities were fine-tuned. The entire process was recorded for inclusion in the final product, i.e., the guidebook for ESL practitioners.

Cost and Staffing

The total cost of this project was $19,058. Four teachers and one mentor worked with the project for a 12-month period totaling 1485 hours or approximately .75 of one person. All of the teachers were experienced ESL teachers and are bilingual in English and Spanish. The teacher who drafted the guidebook and created the classroom activities had twelve years of foreign language and second language teaching experience and a Master's degree.

The project director who served as the project mentor has a doctorate with a focus in anthropology, education and linguistics and is an accomplished researcher. The mentor had taught ESL and developed ESL curriculum for both Spanish speakers and speakers of languages from Southeast Asia. Bilingual in English and Spanish, the mentor has had extensive training in contrastive phonology.

Objectives Met and Results

All proposed objectives for this study were either met or exceeded.

Objective 1: To identify significant pronunciation problems for speakers of Spanish and Vietnamese.

This was achieved by integrating data from contrastive analysis with both teacher and student ideas. The results were then tabulated and prioritized.

Objective 2: To review selected resources on phonology and pronunciation teaching.

This objective was accomplished by identifying and acquiring both the latest staff development materials and materials intended for student use. Additionally, to avoid the "throwing the baby out with the bath water" problem, older resources--generally considered passe--were also reviewed in light of a) what was consistent with newer findings and teaching on the subjects and b) what could be salvaged within a life skills curriculum.

Objective 3. To develop classroom activities and strategies to help beginning ESL students in life skills classes improve pronunciation.

Again, as outlined in the guidebook, working collaboratively with their own experiences and the newly acquired research, teachers developed and honed twelve activities and strategies that are easily and effectively integrated into beginning ESL life skills classes.

Objective 4: To implement these activities in a minimum of four beginning ESL classes with a minimum of fifteen students each.

Four teachers teaching a total of sixteen ten-twelve week classes (each with a minimum of fifteen students) used the teaching strategies and activities developed in objective three. Of these sixteen classes, twelve were beginning classes.

Objective 5: To review and revise the activities as needed.

Although a formal process of quantitative assessment of pronunciation was identified through the research process of this project, staffing limitations made it impractical to implement. Nonetheless, relying on qualitative feedback from both teacher and students, the activities were generally quite effective as originally designed. They made minor modifications to a few of the activities at the suggestion of more advanced ESL learners.

Beyond proving effective with beginners, the activities described in the guidebook were also effective with intermediate and advanced students as well. Teachers said that the activities did in fact incorporate easily into the existing life skills curriculum.

Objective 6: To write and print the guidebook.

Since the guidebook was intended for teachers and tutors unfamiliar with phonology and pronunciation, we decided that the guidebook would be written by project participants whose knowledge and

professional expertise had been enriched by the process.

Upon its completion, the handbook was submitted to both ESL practitioners and non practitioners alike to test its "user-friendliness."

Objective 7: To write and submit the final report.

The final report was written and submitted following completion of the guidebook's final printing.

Objective 8: To disseminate the information to practitioners and program personnel as appropriate.

Both the guidebook including the final report have been submitted to AdvancE and ERIC. Information on the project--as an article/ press release--is to be submitted to "What's the Buzz?" The project has been presented to the directors and coordinators of the Region 7 Tri-Valley Staff Development Center for consideration as a regional staff development workshop. Additionally, if funds are available plans are underway to conduct regional workshops through the remaining eight Staff Development Centers as needed. As appropriate, announcements of the project will be posted to appropriate lists on INTERNET.

Evaluation Techniques and Results

Formative evaluation processes were used to determine that the project was meeting its objectives within established time frames. Summative evaluation processes determined that the project objectives had indeed been accomplished. (C.F. Objectives 5 & 6 above)

Findings and Implications

The findings of this study suggest that there are common pronunciation problems experienced by ESL students--particularly beginners--whatever the first language and that it is possible to address these common problems within the context of a communicative life skills class.

Also resulting from this study is the fact that it is possible for teachers and tutors who are relative new comers to the fields of phonology and pronunciation teaching not only to diagnose common problems experienced by beginning ESL learners, but also to target specific language groups in order to more appropriately address local needs.

Furthermore, it is possible to accomplish all of the above utilizing techniques that respond to a variety of learning styles and preferences.

The results of the research and materials review also tend to suggest that, in currently available teaching materials, insufficient attention is paid to teaching pronunciation to beginners. Nonetheless, their needs would seem to be at least as immediate (if not more so) than their counterparts in more advanced levels of instruction.

Fortunately, as this project demonstrates, there is a process to which ESL practitioners can turn to in the mean time in order to meet the needs of their beginning ESL learners.

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